

EPI Update for Friday, June 13, 2008 (supplement)
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health

Hepatitis A Vaccine During Flooding Information

During times of flooding, people who are exposed to flood waters are often concerned about receiving a hepatitis A vaccine, even though flooding is not shown to be a risk for hepatitis A. The national guidelines (ACIP) do not recommend hepatitis A vaccination for the general public during flooding, even if it is possible that sewage may be contaminating the flood waters since studies conducted among U.S. workers exposed to raw sewage do not indicate increased risk for hepatitis A virus infection (for more information see www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5507a1.htm).

The risk of being exposed to hepatitis A in flood waters is very low due to the low rate of hepatitis A in our Iowa communities, and the dilution by the flood waters. Hepatitis A outbreaks have not occurred after recent floods or after hurricanes in other parts of the country, including the devastating hurricanes in the last several years.

Thus, hepatitis A vaccination NOT recommended due to exposure to flood waters.

Information about hepatitis A:

Hepatitis A infection in childhood typically is asymptomatic or causes mild symptoms. Adults often experience abrupt onset of fever, malaise, anorexia, nausea, and abdominal discomfort, followed by jaundice a few days later.

Hepatitis A vaccine is routinely recommended for the following persons from 12 months of age and older:

- All children at age 1 year (i.e., 12–23 months)
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common
- Men who have sex with men
- Users of injection and non-injection drugs
- Persons with clotting-factor disorders (e.g., hemophilia)
- Persons with chronic liver disease
- Children living in areas with increased rates of hepatitis A during the baseline period of 1987-1997 (this does not include Iowa)
- Persons who work with hepatitis A virus in a laboratory setting

Questions regarding hepatitis A vaccine should be directed to the Immunization Program, 800-831-6293, Terri Thornton extension 2 or Don Callaghan at 515-473-8344.